

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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R 121545Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1291

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 1261

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR SV NO

SUBJECT: SOVIETS PROPOSE TALKS ON SVALBARD WIVES

REC OSLO 1224 AND PREVIOUS

1. MFA POLITICAL DIRECTOR VIBE INFORMED DCM MARCH 12 THAT AEROFLOT HAD EARLIER IN THE DAY RESPONDED TO THE NORWEGIAN AIR AUTHORITY LETTER ON SVALBARD (REFTEL). AEROFLOT'S REPLY STATED THAT SINCE THE WRITTEN EXCHANGES ON THE SUBJECT WERE NOT PRODUCING ANY PROGRESS, THE SOVIETS PROPOSED TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO AIR AUTHORITIES ON THE WIVES ISSUE EITHER IN MOSCOW OR IN OSLO,

2. VIBE NOTED THAT THE MINISTER HAD NOT YET HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE SOVIETS' REPLY. HE SAID THAT SINCE THE NORWEGIAN/ SOVIET AGREEMENT PROVIDED FOR BILATERAL TALKS BETWEEN THE AIR MINISTRIES IN THE EVENT OF DISPUTES (AND BEFORE RECOURSE TO THE NORWEGIAN COURT SYSTEM), HE DID NOT SEE HOW THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT COULD REFUSE TO HAVE TALKS WITH THE SOVIETS. VIBE WOULD RECOMMEND TO FORMINISTER FRYDENLUND
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THAT THE NORWEGIANS IMMEDIATELY PROPOSE TALKS AS SOON AS POSSI-

BLE IN OSLO. DURING THE TALKS THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WOULD PROVIDE POLITICAL GUIDANCE TO THE NORWEGIAN AIR AUTHORITIES.

3. VIBE FELT THAT THE NORWEGIAN SIDE IN THE TALKS WOULD PROBABLY PROPOSE THE TWO POSSIBLE COMPROMISES WHICH THE MFA IS ALREADY STUDYING: 1) THAT THE WIVES BE REMOVED TO BARENTSBURG; OR 2) THAT THE SOVIETS REDUCE TO SIX THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE AT LONGYEARBYEN. VIBE DOUBTED THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD ACCEPT EITHER PROPOSAL, AND GUESSED THAT THEY WOULD PROPOSE ANOTHER ROUND OF TALKS IN MOSCOW AS A STALLING TACTIC. THE NORWEGIANS WOULD THEN HAVE SEVERAL POSSIBLE RESPONSES: 1) AGREEING TO FURTHER TALKS THOUGH THIS WOULD HAVE THE OBVIOUS DISADVANTAGE OF ALLOWING THE SOVIETS TO DRAG THE ISSUE OUT; 2) TAKING AEROFLOT TO COURT IN NORWAY FOR VIOLATION OF THE HOUSING CONTRACT; ABROGATING THE HOUSING CONTRACT.

4. REFLECTING THE SAME ANALYSIS OF THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH BUCHER-JOHANNESSEN GAVE US (REFTEL, VIBE FELT THAT THE PUBLIC OPINION WAS INCREASINGLY CRITICAL OF THE MFA'S HANDLING OF THE WIVES ISSUE. ON THE OTHER HAND, VIBE WAS CONCERNED THAT IF THE NORWEGIANS TAKE A TOUGH POSITION WITH THE SOVIETS, THEY MUST BE PREPARED FOR THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SOVIETS DO NOT RECEDE AND THAT IN THE EXTREME THE NORWEGIANS COULD BE FORCED TO EVICT THE SOVIET WIVES FROM THE AIRPORT.

5. DCM NOTED THAT THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS WERE, OF COURSE, A MATTER FOR THE GON TO ASSESS. HOWEVER, IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE NORWEGIANS TO REMEMBER THAT OTHER GOVERNMENTS ABROAD WERE WATCHING HOW THE GON RESPONDED TO THE SOVIET PROBE ESPECIALLY SINCE MANY SUCH GOVERNMENTS, LIKE OURS, SUPPORTED NORWEGIAN SOVEREIGNTY ON SVALBARD.
BYRNE

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